

## **Broad Disapproval for Gonzales In Firing of U.S. Attorneys**

Americans by wide margins think political motivations fueled the Justice Department's firing of eight U.S. attorneys and disapprove of how Attorney General Alberto Gonzales has handled it. Fewer – though still a sizable group – say it should cost him his job.

Overall, 67 percent in this ABC News/Washington Post poll think the prosecutors were fired mainly for political reasons, not on the basis of their performance. And 58 percent disapprove of how Gonzales has dealt with the issue, while just 24 percent approve. Even in his own party, nearly half of Republicans disapprove.

Nonetheless, fewer, 45 percent of Americans overall, think Gonzales should lose his job, while 39 percent think he should remain. Some of those who don't like how he's handled the issue nonetheless don't see it as reason enough for his ouster; that's true especially among Republicans and conservatives.

	Gonzales' handling of the issue		Should he lose his job?	
	Approve	Disapprove	Yes	No
All	24%	58	45%	39
Democrats	17	71	61	27
Independents	22	56	46	36
Republicans	35	47	25	59
Liberals	23	66	58	28
Moderates	17	64	52	33
Conservatives	35	45	29	55

In a statement Sunday, Gonzales apologized for “my missteps” and said he should have done more to make the review process more rigorous. But he said the firings were not improper and that he remembered having only an indirect role beyond approving them.

Gonzales is scheduled to testify about the issue Tuesday before the Senate Judiciary Committee. The outcome could be crucial, since a substantial number of Americans, 16 percent, are as yet withholding judgment on whether or not he should stay in office.

**PARTISAN** – There are strong partisan reactions to the issue, albeit with room for substantial criticism from Republicans and conservatives as well as others. More than seven in 10 Democrats, moderates and liberals alike think the prosecutors were fired for political rather than performance-related issues. Two-thirds of independents say the same. Fewer conservatives and Republicans share this view, but majorities (54 percent and 53

percent, respectively) still see political reasons rather than performance issues for the firings.

	Main reason for the firings?	
	Political	Performance
All	67%	19
Democrats	79	10
Independents	67	19
Republicans	53	30
Liberals	78	12
Moderates	72	16
Conservatives	54	29

Moreover, only 35 percent of Republicans and conservatives approve of how Gonzales has handled the issue. Apart from these two groups, majorities disapprove.

JOB – Whether it rises to the level of a firing offense is less one-sided. While 47 percent of Republicans disapprove of how Gonzales has handled it, many fewer, 25 percent, think it should cost him his job. Conservatives, similarly, are 16 points more likely to disapprove than to say Gonzales should go.

Those compunctions are not limited to the GOP base. Independents are 10 points more likely to disapprove of how Gonzales has handled the issue than to say he should lose his job because of it; moderates, 12 points. Nonetheless, 52 percent of moderates (rising to 58 percent of liberals) favor ousting Gonzales over the issue.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone April 12-15, 2007, among a random national sample of 1,141 adults, including an oversample of African-Americans. The results from the full survey have a three-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, PA.

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ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollvault.html>.

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Full results follow (\*= less than 0.5 percent).

Q1-20 Held for release.

21. The Department of Justice recently fired eight chief federal prosecutors. Based on what you know, do you think these eight U.S. attorneys were fired mainly (on the basis of their performance), or mainly (for political reasons)?

	Performance	Political reasons	No opinion
4/15/07	19	67	14

22. Do you approve or disapprove of the way U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales has handled this issue?

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
4/15/07	24	58	18

23. Given this issue do you think Gonzales should (lose his job) as attorney general, or (remain in his position)?

	Lose his job	Remain in his position	No opinion
4/15/07	45	39	16

Q24-46 Held for release.  
Q47-49 Previously released.

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